

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 361 392

TM 020 493

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TITLE Continuation High School Effectiveness Study, Phase II: Qualitative Analysis of More Effective Schools. (A Report to the California Legislature Pursuant to 1987 Budget Act Supplemental Report, Section 9.00, Item #6100-101-001).
INSTITUTION California State Dept. of Education, Sacramento. Office of Program Evaluation and Research.
PUB DATE 91
NOTE 54p.
AVAILABLE FROM Special Studies and Evaluation Reports Unit, California Department of Education, 721 Capitol Mall, P.O. Box 944272, Sacramento, CA 94244-2720.
PUB TYPE Reports - Evaluative/Feasibility (142)
EDRS PRICE MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS *Academic Achievement; Achievement Tests; Attendance; Class Size; *Continuation Students; *Dropout Prevention; *Educational Assessment; Educational Change; Educational Improvement; Financial Support; High School Graduates; High Schools; Instructional Materials; *Nontraditional Education; *School Effectiveness; Teacher Student Relationship
IDENTIFIERS *California; California Assessment Program

ABSTRACT

Information is provided on factors associated with the effectiveness of continuation high schools in California. This Phase 2 report (following a Phase 1 study of 54 schools) is based on information gathered from 10 schools that were selected as among the more effective in the state at retaining students in school and graduating them. Effectiveness was determined by a single variable composed of dropout rate, attendance rate, graduation rate, and average achievement on the California Assessment Program tests. Data were collected through interviews and school visits. Among the important factors characteristic of effective continuation schools were a curriculum with well-developed personal and career elements, and a strongly positive staff. Students have chosen to attend these schools and appear to have more positive attitudes than would otherwise be the case. Various support services are available in these schools, and interactions between students and staff are highly personal. These schools emphasize learning rather than teaching. In addition, these schools receive adequate funding from their districts to provide small classes and a variety of materials and equipment. Appendixes A and B, analytic descriptions of the schools and the effectiveness factors, are published separately. Appendix C, attached, contains the recommendations from the Phase 1 study. (SLD)

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Continuation High School Effectiveness Study, Phase II: Qualitative Analysis of More Effective Schools

(A report to the California Legislature pursuant to 1987 Budget
Act Supplemental Report, Section 9.00, Item #6100-101-001)

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California Department of Education
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Sacramento, 1991

Publishing Information

This report was prepared by Margaret Scheffelin and Terry Emmett, Consultants, under the direction of Claire Quinlan, Administrator, Special Studies and Evaluation Reports Unit, Program Evaluation and Research Division, California Department of Education. Special contributions were made to the document by Mary Jo Williams, Visiting Educator, Alternative Education Unit, Youth, Adult, and Alternative Educational Services Division. Any questions regarding this report should be addressed to Terry Emmett, Special Studies and Evaluation Reports Unit, California Department of Education, 721 Capitol Mall, P.O. Box 944272, Sacramento, California 94244-2720 Telephone: (916) 322-5012.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Every research study is the result of the collective, and usually successive, efforts of a number of persons. The authors wish to express their appreciation to the following persons and agencies:

- Principals, teachers, counselors, and other staff members and students from the following school districts and schools who graciously provided the information on which this study is based.

Laguna High School
Analay Union High School District

Liberty High School
Benicia Unified School District

Lovell High School
Cutler-Orosi Unified School District

La Vista High School
Fullerton Joint Union High School District

Cheviot Hills High School
Los Angeles Unified School District

Downtown High School
San Francisco Unified School District

La Cuesta High School
Santa Barbara High School District

North Campus Continuation High School
Travis Unified School District

Alta Vista High School
Vista Unified School District

Wolfskill High School
Winters Joint Unified School District

- William McCormick of the Educational Demographics Unit for preliminary data on "more effective" continuation high schools from Phase I of the Department's effectiveness study and for discussions on the design of Phase II of the study.

- External reviewers of the draft data collection instruments, members of the Special Studies and Evaluation Reports Unit Advisory Committee and field persons in Continuation Education. In alphabetical order, the reviewers were: Hank Beck, Chairperson of the Association of California School Administrators (ACSA)

Committee on Continuation and Educational Options; Wayne Crow, President of the California Continuation Education Association; Theresa Housden, San Juan Unified School District; Linda Murai, Sacramento County Office of Education; Jane Saldana, Fresno County Office of Education; Brian Sarvis, Modesto City School District; Arthur Serabian, Clovis Unified School District; and Elizabeth Tomblin, San Diego City School District.

- Terra Black and Jackie Talle for their able technical support.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
CONTINUATION HIGH SCHOOLS EFFECTIVENESS STUDY, PHASE II:
QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS OF MORE EFFECTIVE SCHOOLS

This report provides information on factors associated with effectiveness of continuation high schools. It is based on information gathered from ten schools which were selected as being among the more effective in the state at retaining students in school and graduating them.

The California Department of Education conducted the study in response to a legislative mandate to examine the influence of instructional materials purchases on the effectiveness of continuation high schools¹. In order to extend the usefulness of the study, it was designed in such a manner as to provide additional information on factors influencing the effectiveness of continuation schools. Phase I of the study was quantitative and covered all schools operated in the 1985-86 school year (McCormick, 1990). Phase II, the results of which are reported here, was qualitative and covered a selected sample of ten of the 54 schools identified as "more effective" through the Phase I study. Effectiveness was determined by a single variable composed of four factors, dropout rate, attendance rate, graduation rate, and average achievement on CAP tests. Data, consisting of program descriptions and personal experiences provided by school staff and students, were collected through telephone interviews and school visitations in the Spring of 1990.

FINDINGS

The following factors are characteristic of the ten "more effective" continuation high schools included in this study. They represent only a small portion of the information gathered. For a more complete discussion of the findings, see the Summary.

- o The curriculum offered to students in these high schools goes beyond the academic to include well-developed personal and career components. Coursework is relevant to student needs and interests.
- o Principals, teachers, and other staff are strongly positive about their students, believe in student opportunities to succeed, and are committed to the mission of the school.

¹ See page 1 for budget language.

- o Rates of involuntary transfer are low. Students have chosen to attend these continuation schools and probably enter the programs with more positive attitudes than would otherwise be the case.
- o A variety of support services are available including counseling, tutoring, work study and concurrent enrollment opportunities, variable credit options, and independent study.
- o Interactions between students and staff are highly personalized. Students know, and are known to, staff members. Staff, like students, view the school as "family". Emphasis is placed on communication, fair and consistent behavior, the development of personal relationships, and support for each other.
- o Schools emphasize learning rather than teaching. All students are expected to learn. When this is not happening, staff feel that they are responsible for finding out why and changing the situation.
- o Such "more effective" schools receive sufficient funding from their districts to provide for small class sizes and a variety of materials and equipment, thus allowing for individualization of instruction.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations are offered at the state level to the Legislature, the Department of Education, and institutes for teacher training. Recommendations are offered at the local level to school districts and county superintendents. They are based on the findings and conclusions of the Phase II study and on the experience of professionals in the area of continuation education, alternative education, and educational options. The recommendations of the Phase I study (see Appendix C) should be considered in conjunction with these recommendations as an attempt was made to avoid duplication. In some instances, conclusions similar to those of the Phase I study were so clearly drawn in the Phase II study that recommendations have been offered which overlap those of the first study.

To the Legislature

Revise the funding process for continuation programs, instituting separate revenue limits for continuation high schools, providing incentives for limiting the size of individual continuation schools, and establishing incentives for continuation high schools to extend their support services to students still functioning within the comprehensive high school.

Enact legislation mandating that transfers to continuation high schools be voluntary.

To the California Department of Education

Provide technical assistance to both comprehensive and continuation high schools on successful methods of reaching high-risk students and on the findings of the continuation high school evaluations.

Include the extension of certain services proven to be successful in continuation high schools to comprehensive high schools in planning for the Every Student Succeeds initiative, the Educational Options Strategic Plan, and the High School Task Force report.

To institutes for teacher training

Include specific instruction in methods of teaching and supporting high risk youth in all programs of teacher preparation.

To districts

Promote the extension of attitudes and practices which have proven to be successful in continuation schools within all district high schools in order to address academic or behavioral problems without removing students from mainstream programs.

Promote staff development related to positive, supportive behavior toward students, an emphasis on learning outcomes, fair and consistent limits, and communication.

Limit involuntary transfers to continuation education programs. When necessary, view such transfers as a positive option for students rather than a disciplinary action in order to decrease the stigma attached to continuation programs.

Allow all continuation high school students to enroll concurrently in classes and activities on the comprehensive high school campus when those classes and activities are not available at the continuation high school.

Ensure that all funding resources for which students qualify are sent to the continuation high school when the student transfers.

To county superintendents

Provide experienced technical support on factors associated with successful continuation school programs to improve delivery and timeliness of services to students both within comprehensive and alternative programs.

CHAPTER I. Introduction

This chapter contains sections on the purpose of this report, background information on continuation education programs, on the funding process for continuation schools, and on the effectiveness study, a review of the literature, a discussion of the Phase I study, and the research questions addressed in Phase II. Chapters II through V present the method, findings, conclusions, and recommendations.

Purpose of the Report

This report responds to a legislative request for qualitative information on the effectiveness of continuation high schools. An additional purpose is to provide useful information to persons and agencies interested in improving the statewide continuation education program. This report covers Phase II of a two part study, the first phase being a quantitative analysis of factors associated with continuation school effectiveness.

The California Department of Education conducted the study in compliance with Item 6100-101-001, Section 9.00 of the 1987 Budget Act. The requirement was to "study the influence of instructional materials purchases on the effectiveness of continuation high schools, through a combination of statistical analysis and case studies. The department's case studies should attempt to ascertain (1) the degree to which schools with high graduation or attendance rates and high levels of expenditures for books and materials utilize innovative curricula and instructional techniques not employed by other continuation schools, and (2) the nature of any such curricula. The department's findings shall be included in the report prepared pursuant to Section 48443 of the Education Code" (Legislative Analyst's Office, 1987).

Continuation Education Programs in California

Continuation education programs are offered through separate high schools or in continuation classes on comprehensive high school campuses. Continuation high schools are operated by California school districts under the statewide continuation education program, one of California's alternative education programs. (California Department of Education, 1990). Continuation education, an educational option for students since 1919, is a high school diploma program designed for students whose needs are not being met in comprehensive high schools. California has the oldest and largest continuation education program in the nation.

Continuation education programs have been established in nearly all school districts operating high schools. In 1987, there were 427 continuation high schools in California, with an enrollment of nearly one-tenth of California's high school students. The governing board of a district maintaining a continuation high school operates its continuation education program under a large number of Education Code requirements (California Department of Education, 1987).

Continuation high school students are typically over age 16 when they enroll and may stay only a few semesters. Students enroll for a variety of reasons, ranging from the need for a flexible time schedule to accommodate their work schedule to the need to play "catch up" in academic credits so they can complete their high school graduation requirements with their age peers. Some students volunteer and are eager to go to a continuation high school. Some students are guided there by staff at their comprehensive high school for reasons such as poor attendance, a need for academic support, or a need for a more supportive environment. Some students are enrolled involuntarily for disciplinary reasons, which may include truancy or a failure to comply with the discipline code at the comprehensive high school. A few students may be involuntarily transferred as a condition of probation under the auspices of a juvenile court.

The term "continuation education" is unfortunately often confused with the term "continuing education". In California, continuation education is for high school students. Continuing education is for adults who have completed their formal education and are enrolled in additional training, usually for keeping up-to-date in their businesses or professions.

Funding of Continuation High Schools

Historically, districts operating continuation high schools have received additional funding for these schools. Following Proposition 13, funding to districts which had operated continuation high schools prior to 1978 was rolled into the base apportionment and became indistinguishable from other district funding.

Currently, funding for continuation high schools is provided through two mechanisms. First, all districts receive funds based on the average daily attendance (ADA) for students in these schools multiplied by the district's revenue limit. No part of this funding is specifically directed for operation of continuation high schools.

Second, districts which instituted continuation education programs subsequent to 1978-79 receive additional "small school" funds based on each school's attendance level and staff size in the year in

which it was established. Funding levels for small schools have not since been adjusted for inflation or enrollment changes.

As a result of the use of two separate funding mechanisms, the revenues provided for continuation high schools vary considerably from district to district. In addition, districts may exercise internal discretion in the levels of both categorical and general funding provided for continuation high school operation. As a result, actual per student levels of funding to continuation high schools may vary by greater than 100 percent.

Background of the Effectiveness Study

Previously, mandated biennial legislative reports on continuation education programs had been prepared by the Department (California Department of Education, 1988). The legislative requirement for the Department's reports did not address effectiveness of continuation education programs. As required by Education Code Section 48443, the Department's reports summarized the reports submitted by the governing boards of school districts operating continuation education programs. The individual continuation high school reports contained information on the number of pupils served, the costs of the program, attendance patterns, dropout rates, the capability of the schools or programs to graduate youths or prepare them for passing proficiency examinations, and involvement of pupils in occupational training programs.

Review of the Literature

Searches of research files and library holdings revealed that the qualitative effectiveness of continuation high schools has not been studied in depth. Studies have typically been done by mailed questionnaire and by examining existing data reported by schools or school districts. Small-scale research studies have been performed in partial fulfillment of Master's degree programs. In one such study, aimed at increasing student writing activity in a science classroom, the researcher found that students exposed to computer-assisted word-processing improved in their writing skills. Students reported they found writing fun and even easy. Students who were especially helped by word processing included those with messy handwriting, poor spelling skills, short attention spans, and difficulty composing sentences and paragraphs (Day, 1988).

In the larger field of alternative education, the effectiveness of alternative educational program models (not continuation high schools) has been studied by researchers at the National Center for Effective Secondary Schools. They concluded that students needed programs that both enhance academic learning and address personal and social development. Positive attitudes of staff, strong fiscal

support, and staff skills were identified as important components of programs. (National Coalition of Advocates for Students, 1989).

One reason for the lack of systematic study of continuation high schools may have been the relatively low value placed on continuation high schools in the past; an object of low value is less likely to be studied with a view to improvement. As is indicated by the following quote from the CDE annual report for 1989, this perception may be changing.

"Alternative education once was perceived as a last resort, providing necessary educational services for those unfit for the traditional mainstream. But no longer. Today, alternative education means two things: choice and opportunity. It is the recognition that diverse learning styles and individual differences can be served -- not with a single, inflexible educational program -- but with education choices which address individual abilities, needs, and circumstances. And alternative education means opportunity for all those students who simply are not being served by the traditional educational system." (California Department of Education, 1990, p. 32).

The Phase I Study

The Department's Phase I study, published as a companion to this study, is the first known large-scale quantitative study of effectiveness of continuation high school programs. In Phase I, regression analyses were performed on existing school data from all continuation high schools operated during the 1985-86 school year.

The effects of background and treatment variables on a composite outcome measure were examined. School outcome variables were measures of student graduation, attendance, dropouts, and senior California Assessment Program (CAP) test scores. The measures for the 1986 year were combined into a single outcome score that became the dependent variable in a multiple linear regression equation. The seven background variables reflected demographic differences such as type of community (rural, suburban, and urban), parents' educational level, and student mobility and ethnic classifications. The nine treatment variables indicated differences in instructional practices, enrollment and transfer policies, and expenditures. Each background or treatment variable had an independent positive or negative effect on school outcomes. Once background effects were removed, the schools were ranked according to outcomes and classified as "less effective" (N = 51), "mid-effective" (N = 336), and "more effective" (N = 54). Findings of the Phase I study are discussed in Chapter II. (McCormick, 1990)

Research Questions addressed in Phase II

Responding to the mandate for qualitative information on effective continuation high schools, two research questions were formulated. The first research question was: "What instructional curricula, techniques, and materials have contributed to the effectiveness of continuation high schools?"

The second research question was: "How have effective continuation high schools maintained their effectiveness?"

CHAPTER II. Method

This chapter presents an overview of the method used to conduct Phase II of the study. Descriptions are provided of the study design, the sample of continuation high schools, the data collection process, data analysis, and the limitations of the study. The study was conducted during the 1989-90 school year. Data were collected during February and March, 1990. Data were analyzed and interpreted by the authors and by an experienced continuation high school teacher-counselor.

A case study design was employed based on examples from the social sciences (Yin, 1984). The design was purposely selected for its capability to generate information complementary to that provided by the Phase I study and to elucidate some of the findings of that study. Two factors employed in Phase I of the study were used to select schools. The first dimension was school size -- small (cumulative enrollment for the year of less than 89 students), medium (89 to 307 cumulative enrollment), or large (greater than 307 cumulative enrollment). The second was "community type" with values of rural, small city, suburban, and urban. A single school was selected for each size/community type value, with the exception of large/rural and large/small city which were not represented in the "more effective" group of schools. The ten selected schools were among those judged stable over time based on two outcome measures: drop-out rate and attendance rate for the school year 1988-89.

The data collection effort included structured telephone interviews with continuation school principals; site visits which involved interviews with the principal, staff members, and students; classroom observations; and the gathering of transcripts and various documents related to the schools' programs.

The information collected was analyzed for content. The primary data examined were the structured interviews with the ten principals, interviews with staff and students, and notes and documents obtained during site visitations. The data analysis yielded three types of products: descriptions or vignettes of each of the ten schools; composite student portraits; and analysis of the described components of each school. The school descriptions and student portraits are contained in Chapter III, and the component analysis is presented in Separate Appendices A and B.

In developing school descriptions, particular attention was paid to factors which were indicated by the Phase I analysis as associated with differences in continuation school effectiveness. These included the effect of funding, expressed through student to staff ratio and expenditures on supplies; the effect of employing a variable credit system, which was expressed by school attendance which exceeded the required fifteen hours per week; and the effect

of supporting the involvement of students in productive work and educational experiences as indicated by the degree of enrollment in work experience, ROP/C programs, adult school, independent study, and pregnant minors programs. Another factor clearly related to continuation school effectiveness was the commitment of students as indicated by voluntary or involuntary transfer to the school.

In addition, data analysis for the purpose of developing school descriptions focused on those factors which were isolated in the first research question or consistently mentioned in principal interviews as characteristic of their more effective continuation school programs. Such factors included curriculum, instructional techniques and materials, staff attitudes, and counseling.

Student portraits represent composite information obtained from a number of students in different schools. Descriptive information from students with similar stories is combined in order to prevent identification of any individual.

As the data were examined, a number of topics emerged which allowed organization of the data in relation to the research questions. Each interview statement was analyzed for content related to one or more of these topics or components. For the first question, (contributions of curricula, techniques, and materials to the effectiveness of continuation schools) statements were organized according to the following topics: curriculum, instructional techniques, materials, staff attitudes, fiscal support, and staff skills as displayed in Separate Appendix A. For the second research question, (continuing effectiveness of continuation schools, the topics were: staff attitudes, fiscal support, and staff skills (Separate Appendix B).

The primary limitation of the study was the decision, for budgetary reasons, not to conduct interviews at schools selected as "less effective." As a result, there was no comparison group for newly determined factors which had not been included in the Phase I study. (Factors derived from the Phase I study were, by definition, those which distinguished between "less effective" and "more effective" schools.) A second limitation was related to the limited time (one day) spent at each school site. Although a great deal of information was obtained, it was not possible to confirm the interview data through direct observation.

CHAPTER III. Findings

Findings of the study include descriptions of the ten continuation schools which constituted the sample of "more effective" schools, composite student portraits indicating student attitudes toward the effectiveness of their continuation schools, and an analysis of the content of the interviews conducted with principals and staff according to specific topics. School descriptions and student portraits are presented in this chapter. Analyses of the interview content with reference to the two study questions are presented in Separate Appendices A and B.

Descriptions of Ten "More Effective" Continuation High Schools

This section contains descriptions of the ten school sites which were visited. They are intended to be representative of the 54 schools which were found "more effective" in the Phase I study. The names are obviously changed to ensure the confidentiality of information which was provided for the study. While the schools clearly differ on certain dimensions, there are a number of similarities. For example, almost all of the schools have a substantial percentage of students in work experience programs. Almost all have multi-faceted counseling programs. Other factors which appear typical of these "more effective" schools are discussed in Chapter IV: Conclusions.

Unless otherwise noted, comparisons presented in the following descriptions are made to other continuation high schools rather than to comprehensive high schools.

Earth High School

Earth High School was selected as a middle-sized continuation school in a small California city. It has since grown and now has an enrollment of approximately 250 students at any one time and a cumulative enrollment over the year of more than 400 students. Like many other continuation schools there is a high transiency rate; over 150 students transferred in and approximately 190 non-graduating students left the school during 1988-89. Of those who left, the majority transferred to other in-district programs (other continuation high schools, special education, or independent study) or to adult school. The socioeconomic level of the students, based on the level of parent education, is somewhat below the state average of "some college". At Earth, the average level of parent education is greater than "high school graduate" but lower than "some college".

Per-student funding for Earth is between the 50th and 75th percentile for all continuation high schools, but slightly below the average for a middle-sized continuation school. The student-to-staff ratio is relatively high at 27 students per staff member. The school is also ranked between the 50th and 75th percentile in its per student expenditure for materials. This is above the average for a mid-sized continuation school.

In 1988-89, one student received an adult education diploma, four passed the California High School Proficiency Exam, 34 students graduated from Earth High School, and an additional ten students transferred to in-district comprehensive high schools and received diplomas. In all, 20 percent of the estimated average enrollment completed high school in one fashion or another.

The curriculum at Earth includes the basic curriculum available at the comprehensive high school. Graduation requirements are the same. Course descriptions however, may vary and course requirements may be met through individual work plans. In addition, students take courses that address the acquisition of knowledge, the internalization of expectations for success, and a philosophy of "efficacy through effort."

Instruction at Earth High is individualized; students sign contracts specifying the amount and type of work to be performed in each course. Classes are limited to twenty students and instruction is generally individualized although a full array of instructional techniques are employed. Materials are those adopted by the district, supplemented by other materials provided by teachers or the community. Materials are often modified by breaking curricular units into smaller modules. Teachers try to be more varied and more concrete in their instructional delivery than may be common in a comprehensive high school. At the same time they hold high expectations for students in terms of day to day work and overall achievement. Staff is currently planning an academic pentathlon.

Teachers are closely involved with the students, offering them personal as well as academic counseling. A concerted effort is made to determine why students are in a pattern of failure. Students are perceived to need a lot of counseling and a wide range of services. Those provided include: peer counseling, substance abuse counseling, both individual and group counseling related to family and personal issues, and the services of a social worker. As the principal put it, "Counseling pervades the school. We see ourselves as in a medical model, to serve students who are not well."

Teachers also display a caring attitude toward students that extends from academic development to career development. Efforts are made to present materials for a variety of learning styles. Teachers continually look for ways to reach and engage students. Expectations are high. The school works on the philosophy that the system has failed rather than the child; that if appropriate keys can be found, these students can achieve at high levels.

The schedule of classes ends at 12:45 p.m. each day. Students are encouraged to participate in work experience or job training [Regional Occupation Program (ROP)/ Regional Occupation Lab (ROL)] classes in the afternoon. Eighty-seven students, representing 22 percent of the cumulative enrollment, participate in state-approved work experience programs. For those students who are not involved in work experience programs, a computer lab and tutoring is available on the school site. In addition, some students take classes at the local community college or adult education. Most students who are employed are not working toward a life-long career; their jobs are usually in fast food preparation and service or similar positions.

A career emphasis is noticeable, however, within the school community. Classes emphasize information about possible careers. Resources in the community are tapped to provide speakers who are employed in different fields, especially those who are leaders in their fields. Photography, engineering, mechanical drawing, typing and computer skills, repair of small engines and transmissions, bookkeeping, and cabinetry are among the courses available on campus. Vocational education is supported at the school; a Latino Club for vocational interests has recently been developed. Students are encouraged to check their own work, to look for errors, and to want to produce a high quality product. Accuracy is stressed and speed is viewed as secondary.

The school stresses respect and caring for self and others and personal responsibility and self-direction. Students are usually referred to Earth by a guidance team at the comprehensive high school. The transfer is usually voluntary. In their first trimester, students are required to take a class called Learning Theory which covers personal and social issues, thinking skills, learning theory, and theories of knowledge with the goal of promoting self-directed learning and increasing self-esteem. Students are actively taught to demonstrate concern and

caring for others. Students are expected to exercise personal responsibility with regard to school rules. Both rules and consequences are clearly stated.

Although traditional extracurricular activities, including sports, are limited, a variety of student activities do exist. The Principal's Student Advisory Committee allows students a voice in school direction. Students run the student store and a student newspaper. Independent clubs may be formed as long as a faculty sponsor can be found and a set of club rules is approved by the principal. In addition, the school sponsors Outward Bound experiences and an Academic Team Honors Program.

When asked how the school maintained its level of effectiveness, the principal mentioned items relating to the willingness and flexibility of staff, to the confronting of students in a caring, consistent, and fair way, and to the tremendous amount of staff development. In addition, resources were seen as adequate; monies and other support were consistently obtained from the community and from special grants and awards. Some notable quotes were: "We believe every child is a champion;" "We pay a tremendous amount of attention to school culture;" and "We are constantly reinventing ourselves as a school."

Uranus High School

Uranus High School is classified as a large suburban continuation school. Its 1988-89 cumulative enrollment was 613, with males outnumbering females by a ratio of two to one. More than half of the student body transferred in voluntarily after the school year had begun. During the course of the year, 45 percent of the student body left for a variety of reasons other than graduation. The majority of these transferred to other in-district programs, such as a special education program, another continuation school, or independent study. The average level of parent education for Uranus is "high school graduate", well below the state average of "some college".

The school is very well funded for a large school with a total per student expenditure ranked above the 75th percentile and well above average for a large continuation school. Its student to staff ratio is about 15 to 1. Over \$500 per pupil is spent on materials and supplies. This compares to a statewide average of \$64 per pupil spent on supplies for all large continuation schools.

Upon entry to the school, 63 percent of students had accumulated less than 101 credits toward the required 220 for graduation. During 1988-89, nine students passed the California High School Proficiency Exam and another 85 students completed their graduation requirements at Uranus. An additional 33 students transferred to a comprehensive high school and received their diplomas. This total represented 51 percent of the estimated average enrollment.

The schoolwide core curriculum is the same in terms of required courses as that of the comprehensive high school. In addition, a required career preparation course teaches students how to get and keep a job. The state frameworks are used as a guideline for preparing instructional objectives. The principal noted that the school used to use many workbooks, but was moving more toward reliance on newspapers and periodicals. Currently in use are USA Today, The Los Angeles Times, and local papers. The school has a video library and at least one computer in every classroom. The teachers have their own software, much of which they have programmed themselves. While published textbooks are used, they are usually adapted to the needs of the student and may not be intended for the student's grade level.

Instructional strategies, however, vary considerably from those of the comprehensive high school. Contracts are written with the cooperation of individual students for specific amounts of credit. Tutoring is common. New students are tested in reading and begin with work units that are shorter and more varied than is usual for high school students. Math programs include drill in skills but lean heavily to problem solving. Although most teachers provide independent study, which must be done during class time, they also spend a large portion of class time in whole class activities. According to the principal, instructional materials are quite varied and teachers are extremely creative in developing and adapting them for different purposes.

Students are viewed as needing at least as much counseling as students in comprehensive high schools. Some personal counseling is done within the classroom and communication with parents is common. Career counseling is available from the local community college. A substance abuse support group meets one period per week and counseling for drug problems is available from a local drug abuse agency. Newly enrolled students participate in a one week "bridge" program which provides orientation to the school and allows for assessment of counseling needs. In addition, a teen awareness class allows students to deal with personal problems and those encountered in school, work, and the family setting.

During 1988-89, work permits were issued to 138 students (102 part-time/36 full-time). This represents 23 percent of the cumulative enrollment. An ROP counselor visits the school and work experience classes are popular with students. Career education is regarded as extremely important by the staff. Students are released to participate in an intensive vocational assessment at a local vocational center. Career education within the school covers how to get and keep a job, exposure to various occupations through the use of outside speakers, requirements of the work world, occupational searches, education required for various careers, and computer use.

The school is characterized by a strong disciplinary system combined with expressed caring and enthusiasm for the students by teachers. School rules are clearly delineated; acceptable conduct is required for participation in classes; suspected substance abuse results in referrals to community agencies; parents are contacted if students are not in school or have behavioral difficulties. Schoolwork must be legible or it is returned to the student. An organized attendance program is in effect. A dress code is strongly enforced and gang identification is not allowed. Parallel to this rather hard line is a school goal to talk to each student in every period during the day, to touch students more, and to ensure that "no kid can say that no one cared or knew that he or she was there." The principal noted that "We treat kids with dignity."

The staff is exceptionally stable; there has been no turnover in the last four years. Teachers are also versatile, credentialed to teach at least two subjects. Classes are smaller and more intimate than those in a comprehensive high school. The teachers get to know both students and their parents, and make an effort to contact parents when students have done well. The principal viewed the teaching staff as exceptional. "We have a better teacher here, consistent, fair, disposed to humane treatment." The principal also noted that he held exit conferences with all graduates, asking how they were treated, what they thought of the school, how well they had learned, and who their best teachers were.

Extracurricular activities are limited. Students prepare a school newspaper and yearbook and a representative sits on the district Student Advisory Council. On a survey of student satisfaction, the question "Are you satisfied with the extracurricular and cocurricular

program at your school?" elicited the fewest positive responses among 42 items. Only 34 percent of students answered positively.

When asked how the school has maintained its effectiveness, the principal indicated that the most important factor was the willingness of teachers to work with students as individual human beings. "The staff here are good and want to be here." The district sponsored survey of students and staff indicated higher ratings for Uranus than for comprehensive high schools in the areas of satisfaction with the quality of teaching and teachers' behavior, students' behavior toward teachers, and students' behavior toward each other.

Another strong influence was the district level support for the program. The school board particularly was seen as understanding of the goals and problems of the school. "Some board members have personal or close experiences with continuation schools." The district includes continuation school staff in all staff development activities. In addition, fiscal support for the school is seen as quite adequate.

Jupiter High School

Located in a rural area, Jupiter High School was selected as a small continuation school. In 1988-89, it had grown to a cumulative enrollment of 96 and an estimated average enrollment of 55 students. The student body is primarily Hispanic (92%); another four percent is Filipino and four percent is white. According to the principal, seven-eighths of the student population is on AFDC, a higher portion than at the comprehensive high school. The average level of parent education is considerably below the state average. The parents of most students are not high school graduates.

Jupiter is between the 50th and 75th percentile in per pupil funding for all continuation high schools, but considerably lower than the average of \$4388 for small continuation schools. It has a student to staff ratio of 12 to 1, and a supply budget of over \$150 per student which is above average for small continuation schools.

Approximately seven percent of the students were transferred to the school involuntarily; the rest came voluntarily. During 1988-89, eight students returned to comprehensive high schools; five moved to other education programs either within or outside the district; and 11 left school altogether, either at age 18 or for marriage, military service, or other purposes.

Twenty students (22% of the cumulative enrollment) completed graduation requirements during the year. Eleven of these received a diploma from Jupiter; another nine passed the GED (General Education Development) examination.

Jupiter is moving to align its curriculum with the State Frameworks and the Model Curriculum Standards. Currently, the language arts program is integrated from 7th through 12th grade, following district policy for the comprehensive high school. Critical thinking is emphasized throughout the program. Although the number of required courses is the same as for the district comprehensive high school, the number of credits required for graduation is less (190 versus 240), because few electives are offered.

Instructors employ a variety of techniques including whole group and small group instruction, and computerized lessons. When students first enroll, teachers observe their behavior and productivity in class and assess the quality and level of their work. An effort is made to create an instructional situation that will work for each student. Students are encouraged to take independent study and a significant proportion are taking extra units in order to make up credits. Instructional materials are varied. Students use the standard, district-adopted texts for a portion of their work, but in many cases, teachers have adapted them or selected other materials to suit student needs. "Practical" materials are commonly used, such as income tax forms and voter registration forms.

Classroom teachers, classified staff, and the principal all work to provide a climate in the school that encourages high self-esteem and personal responsibility. They all do some counseling. In addition, a district psychologist does both group and individual counseling one day per week, and career and health counseling are available as needed. It is believed, however, that the students need a great deal more. A peer counseling program has recently been started for pregnant students and young mothers.

The career/work training component is another emphasis. In 1988-89 approximately nine percent of the cumulative enrollment was also involved in part-time state-approved work experience programs. Another seven percent are concurrently enrolled in ROP/C programs, which are strongly supported by the community. Speakers representing different occupations are brought to the school and field trips to job sites are provided, often exposing students to occupations they would not see otherwise. In addition, although few electives are available, some business classes are taught.

The school environment is caring and supportive. These factors are secondary, however, to the insistence on discipline, respect, and personal responsibility. Good discipline is seen as key to establishing a climate for learning. The principal practices a counseling approach to student discipline that reinforces students' accountability and teaches alternatives for handling social and personal difficulties. When interviewed, the principal emphasized appropriate demeanor, cleanliness, respect for teachers and other students, parental support, and talking out problems. He noted that the school does not have a problem with smoking. It is simply not allowed. The faculty, he said, foster respect, and students give it.

For its size, Jupiter has a number of opportunities for extracurricular involvement. A student council exists. Students participate in a county-wide league for interschool coed volleyball, basketball, and softball. One week per year is set aside for class competitions. At Christmas, a play is produced. For extracurricular activities as well as academic activities, students are expected to demonstrate high standards of personal conduct and social interaction.

The maintenance of a high level of effectiveness may be attributed to the caring, stable staff who were hired expressly for their abilities to contribute to the school. In addition, the school climate was believed to be exemplary. Students were seen as basically cooperative. "It's not a disciplinary place. Teachers are advisors. Students are here for attendance problems and lack of credits."

Sun High School

With a total cumulative enrollment of 55 students, Sun High School is quite small even among continuation high schools. It is located in a California suburb in an district serving many military families. Its estimated average enrollment is 33 students. The student body is primarily white (73%). Nine percent are Hispanic, six percent black, and six percent Asian. Seventy percent are reportedly from broken homes. The parents of Sun High School students are better educated than the average for the state. Their average education is between "some college" and "four-year college graduate."

Sun High School is extremely well-funded on a per student basis even for small continuation schools. It ranks well above the 75th percentile among all continuation schools. The student to staff ratio is 11 to 1 and over \$300 per student is spent on materials and supplies.

All but two of the 22 students who transferred to Sun during 1988-89 did so voluntarily. During the same year, three students returned to comprehensive high schools and 15 moved to other education programs, mostly outside the district. Three voluntarily left school without a diploma on attaining the age of 18.

Sixteen students (29% of the school's cumulative enrollment) received diplomas in 1988-89. Fourteen students graduated from Sun High School and two others transferred to the local comprehensive high school and received diplomas. With the exception of 30, rather than 40 credits in English, the graduation requirements are the same as those at the district comprehensive high school.

The curriculum follows state and district guidelines for subject areas but is delivered almost entirely on an individualized basis. All students sign contracts specifying the type and amount of work they will perform and the number of credits to be earned. Some small-group instruction is employed and outside speakers are occasionally asked to speak to the entire student body, but instruction is primarily one-on-one. The low student/staff ratio allows for extensive tutoring. Students may, however, complete their work using a variety of study techniques including cooperative learning, computer-assisted instruction and drill, and independent study.

Primary instructional materials are texts adopted by the district, materials correlated with the regular textbooks, and additional teacher selected items. The principal noted that they wanted to avoid a tendency to use "watered down" versions of regular texts. Teachers create their own course outlines and study guides based on the regular texts. Chapters in the texts may be broken down into smaller units or otherwise modified to be more relevant to students.

A lot of time is spent on academic counseling. Counseling takes place at the intake conference, during the semester, and at the end of each semester. Although personal counseling does not appear to be a priority

for the school, teachers are available to discuss personal problems during tutoring sessions. In addition, a forty-minute group processes course meets once a week to deal with topics such as suicide prevention, family life, and community service.

The climate in the school tends to be disciplined, businesslike, and oriented toward academic accomplishment. Students are expected to be productive and there is pressure to accomplish the work in a specified time frame. The few extracurricular activities are dependent upon the productive behavior of 80 percent of the students. Those students who are not productive do not take part. At the same time, teachers provide a great deal of individual attention and demonstrate concern for all students.

In 1988-89, 13 percent of students were involved in part-time state approved work experience programs. Another four percent were concurrently enrolled in ROP/C programs. According to the principal, however, there is little emphasis on employment. "Most students don't have jobs here; graduating is first in importance. If they find a job on their own and complete the work experience paperwork, I will enroll them in work experience. Otherwise they get no credit for working."

When asked what factors contributed to maintenance of a high level of effectiveness at Sun, the principal emphasized teachers' involvement with students, a family atmosphere at the school, and the constant opportunities for communication with both students and parents. He also noted that students were closely monitored, that a process existed for dealing with students who were not making academic progress, and that an emphasis was put on learning.

Mars High School

Mars High School is a small continuation school located in a small city in a rural area. In 1988-89, it had a cumulative enrollment of 34 students and an estimated average enrollment of only 13 students. It is extremely well funded with a total per student expenditure well above the 75th percentile. The ratio of students to staff is very low at approximately eight students per teacher. Over \$180 per student is spent on supplies, well above the 75th percentile.

All of the 21 students who transferred to Mars during 1988-89 did so voluntarily. Ten nongraduating students transferred out of the school for other educational programs. Three left voluntarily at age 18, and one student was declared a habitual truant. The parents of Mars students have about as much education as the state average, "some college."

A total of seven students, representing 21 percent of the school's cumulative enrollment, received diplomas in 1988-89. Three returned to comprehensive high schools and graduated, while four received continuation high school diplomas. Like the district comprehensive high school, Mars requires 250 credits for graduation.

Mars provides the same academic curriculum available at the local comprehensive high school. Few electives are available, but some extras, such as career classes, are offered. New students are tested in reading, language and mathematics. Individualized study contracts are then negotiated between student and teacher. The very low student to teacher ratio allows a great deal of individualized instruction to be employed. In addition, group activities, including cooperative learning, are common. Materials used for instruction include lots of newspapers and magazines.

Counseling is regarded as a very important part of the school program. The principal indicated that most teachers address personal needs in the same manner that special education teachers do, accommodating individual needs and providing more counseling. "Every year we're doing much more crisis counseling, to get them through the school day." The district psychologist and school nurse are also housed on the campus and are available as needed.

High expectations are held for students with relation to both deportment and responsibility. Some students break the rules initially but learn to adjust. Expectations are clearly and repeatedly stated. Students who do not attend school are "hounded". There is constant contact with the home. Ten report cards are sent per year and parental contacts are made for a variety of reasons.

Although no students were involved in part-time state-approved work experience programs during 1988-89, four students (12 percent) were working full-time and 10 students (29 percent) were working part-time. Another four students were concurrently enrolled in ROP/C programs,

community colleges, or pregnant minor programs. The principal characterized the career preparation portion of the curriculum as "very informal, not a grandiose program". One week per year is devoted to preparing for the county job fair. Skills for seeking employment, such as interviewing, writing resumes, and developing a sample letter, are also taught.

Although on-campus extracurricular activities are few, students are encouraged to participate in afternoon classes or activities at the comprehensive high school. They may also attend sporting events and dances but are not allowed to participate in athletics at that campus.

Factors believed to contribute to the maintenance of effectiveness of the program at Mars were the organization of the school to accommodate the needs of individual students, the family atmosphere, and communication among students, parents, and staff. In addition, the support of the school board was valued. A board meeting is held at the school each year and efforts are made to bring continuation education to the board's attention. All students do a presentation for the board describing their experiences at Mars.

Saturn High School

Situated in a California suburb, Saturn High School is a medium sized continuation school with a cumulative enrollment for 1988-89 of 107 students. The estimated average enrollment is 71 students. Total per student expenditures are above the 75th percentile for all continuation schools. There are 12 students for each staff member. The per student expenditure for supplies is slightly above the state's average of \$79 for all continuation high schools.

Transfers to Saturn during 1988-89 were all voluntary. Twenty-seven students left the school prior to graduating and did not transfer to the district comprehensive high school. The majority of these either moved out of the district (10) or transferred to in-district programs such as special education, another continuation high school, or independent study (12). Three students transferred to adult school. On the average, parents of Saturn High School students are less well-educated than the state average. Most have a high school education.

Twenty-three students, representing 21 percent of the school's cumulative enrollment, graduated in 1988-89. Of these, six graduated from comprehensive high schools, while 17 received continuation high school diplomas. Unlike the policy in most districts, transcripts from Saturn describe courses as "Opportunity English" and "Opportunity History".

Graduation from Saturn requires 220 credits, the same as the comprehensive high school. Curriculum development is important at Saturn. Staff push to achieve the same academic status that the regular high school provides. Literature is stressed in English classes; an effort is made to make sure that students pass the writing competencies; an American Studies course is being developed which will incorporate literature, history, art work, and film. Unlike many continuation schools, Saturn offers laboratory science courses. Three types of science are available: cultural anthropology, life science, and physical science.

Specific goals are set for each student which, in most cases, exceed the basic proficiency standards. Teachers monitor student work and adjust instructional strategies and assigned materials to meet student needs. Mathematics is completely individualized because students range from those who don't add and subtract consistently to those who are studying trigonometry. Computers are used extensively; the district computer coordinator is their computer teacher. A wide variety of instructional materials are employed including tapes, videotapes, articles, magazines, textbooks, and manipulative materials. In math, students are often given problems to solve. For instance, one on building bridges was designed to familiarize students with three-dimensional structures, support points, and ways to strengthen the load-bearing capacity of a bridge. Students work together, sharing ideas, to develop the strongest bridge.

Counseling pervades the school. Staff are available for advice and support on both academic and personal issues. A continuing effort is made to find out what caused the academic problems students are experiencing and to find resources to deal with those problems. A psychologist works with voluntary groups segregated by sex and with individuals. A half-time counselor teaches peer counseling and oversees the peer counseling program. Specialized counseling is also available for substance abuse, eating disorders, teenage depression, sexual behavior and family planning, and decision-making.

Career development is strongly emphasized at Saturn. Twenty-two students (21 percent) take part in either part-time or full-time state approved work programs. Another 50 students are concurrently enrolled in ROP/C and 42 in independent study programs. Efforts are made to familiarize students with different career opportunities. Speakers, both regular employees and apprentices, are brought to the campus. Students take field trips to work sites. In addition, a "job shadowing" program is organized through the local Chamber of Commerce. Students study a variety of possible jobs in order to decide whom to follow. After shadowing someone in a particular position, students relate their experiences and discuss the advantages and disadvantages of the various positions. Courses are offered and some students hold apprenticeships in child care, plumbing, carpentry, electrical wiring, data entry, and other computer uses.

The school might be characterized as very active in a number of areas. It has high academic standards and a strong emphasis on career development. The personal component, as exemplified by the counseling program, is also very strong. In addition, there is a caring atmosphere. The principal emphasized the personal involvement of staff with each student. Students, in turn, "look out" for each other. While discipline was never mentioned, students know that productivity is important and that the rules include completing assignments, preparing for class, being on time, and doing one's own work.

When asked what factors contributed to the maintenance of effectiveness at Saturn High School, the principal focused on the opportunity afforded teachers to get involved with their students. He felt that teachers really cared about their students and that, because of small classes, community support, and substantial funding, the school was able to make students and their success its first priority.

Neptune High School

Neptune High School is a medium-sized continuation school in a rural setting. Its cumulative enrollment in 1988-89 was 246 students. An estimated 83 of these are present at any one time. The student population contains a high percentage of disadvantaged students who have a high incidence of transiency and absence from school. They are further characterized by a notable lack of self-esteem, motivation, responsibility, and decision-making skills. The level of education of parents of Neptune students is slightly below the state average of "some college."

The school ranks between the 50th and 75th percentile in expenditures per pupil, most of which is spent to bring the student staff ratio to 13 to 1. A considerably smaller amount per student than average is spent on supplies. The school ranks below the 25th percentile on this measure.

While many students return to the comprehensive high school to graduate, Neptune has recently averaged 12 graduates per year. In 1988-89, 10 percent of the cumulative enrollment received diplomas from either the comprehensive high school or Neptune. The school offers several alternatives to graduation such as the General Education Development (GED) test, the California High School Proficiency Examination (CHSPE), and graduation through a junior college program or adult school.

The curriculum is designed to satisfy the district graduation requirements, but the courses are more practical in nature than those in the comprehensive high school. Courses are oriented to teach the skills necessary to meet district competency standards. Credits are awarded on a variable credit basis for satisfactorily completed coursework. Students can and do earn additional credits by completing extra work.

The academic program at Neptune High is offered in either small classes or independent study. The teaching style varies from teacher-centered, as in English where the objective is to make the curriculum literature based, to student-centered, as in the social sciences, where a popular course is based on self-observation and evaluation with the objective of bringing about behavioral changes. New students are tested in mathematics and English; teachers modify the instructional materials on the basis of the results. Many courses are interdisciplinary with elements of career application, social issues, language arts, and mathematics. Courses can be made interdisciplinary and tailor-made to a small group's or individual's needs by using independent modules or "packets". For example, one science class was based upon 30 independent packets, which reflected the components listed above.

The teachers also serve as counselors to the students. In addition, a community counseling service provides group counseling services one day per week.

The work experience program, which emphasizes occupational preparation and combined work and study is strong at this school. Fifteen percent of the students are involved in full or part-time work programs and another eight percent are concurrently enrolled in ROP/C, community college, or pregnant minor. Another strength of this school is its computer literacy program, which is very popular with the students.

Although the school has no formal library, it has a variety of textbooks and paperbacks, especially in the classics and literature related to teenage problems. In addition, the school has a sizable video tape library containing many university-produced programs on practical subjects such as AIDS, etc.

The school stresses respect for others and attention to personal needs. High expectations for each student are reviewed twice each semester, so they are never lost from sight. The environment is highly structured and behavior standards are known by all. Student attendance is carefully monitored. Some students, who have returned to their comprehensive high schools, have asked to come back, reporting that there was too much temptation in other settings.

In contrast to the comprehensive high school, there is a lack of extracurricular activities. There is no student government or athletic program.

When asked how the school maintained its level of effectiveness, the principal attributed the school's success to the staff's strong commitment to continuation education. Although there is tremendous student turnover, there is very little staff turnover. The staff is very flexible and willing to meet individual students' needs. The staff exert a stabilizing influence on the school.

Venus High School

Venus High School occupies the "urban medium-sized" school slot in this study's sample of continuation high schools. Over the course of the year 1988-89 it enrolled 159 students; approximately 45 of these students are enrolled at any one time. It is one of many continuation high schools in a large urban school district. The school population reflects the ethnically balanced population of the surrounding community. Parents of students average between a high school education and some college courses. This is slightly below the state average.

Somewhat more than the average for continuation high schools is spent on a per student basis to educate these students. Most of this funding is spent on personnel. The school has a ratio of 16 students per staff member. Approximately \$150 per student is spent on materials and supplies, an amount ranked above the 75th percentile for all continuation high schools.

In 1988-89, 12 students completed graduation requirements and received either a continuation high school diploma, an adult education diploma, or a GED certificate. Three other Venus students transferred to an "in-district conventional high school" and received their high school diplomas.

In 1988-89, the student population was predominantly male (60 percent) between the ages of 16 and 18. Almost 72 percent of all students transferred in after the first month of the school year; 70 percent of those were voluntary transferees. Sixty-nine percent of the entire student body at entry had less than 101 of the school's and the district's required 220 credits for graduation after two to three years of high school. Many of the Venus High students enroll due to a lack of support in any part of their lives, including their regular high schools. In such circumstances, students fall behind academically and are frequently truant for a year before they attend Venus.

Entering students take both a reading and math pretest. Student reading levels range from the college level to non-existent. Given this wide fluctuation in student academic backgrounds reflected in reading levels, Venus' curriculum operates on the following three premises: a) to prepare students in "the basics" (including learning how to read); b) to offer an education equivalent to the regular high school; and, c) to require all students to have contracts (enabling them to work at their own pace) in all subjects.

Implementation of these premises begins at the Resource Center where the individual student curriculum contracts are developed. Individualized instruction including independent study, computer-assisted learning, and student-set goals characterize each contract. In the classroom, teachers help students select steps to reach their goals. Thus, each student has textbook references and possible assignments in various texts and other sources. Yet, student indication

that she/he has previously done a particular task or project will usually result in the teacher's finding another assignment to challenge the student.

Venus High staff recognizes that many of their students are kinesthetic learners thus needing to do more than just read and listen. In this context, field experiences and hands-on learning are useful instructional techniques. For example, manipulatives are used in math classes. Every student's contract contains computer learning and preparation. In humanities, two or three times per week instruction incorporates something that students can see, touch, and handle. The teacher includes drawing or illustrating as well as writing assignments. A peer tutoring program, in which better students help others learn on a one-to-one basis, in fact helps the "teaching" students learn better themselves. Faculty also use small groups and cooperative learning opportunities to vary the instructional pattern.

As the instructional curriculum is mandated by the district, Venus High faculty use state and district texts and curriculum guides as references for their courses. Other instructional materials such as magazines, paperback books, overheads, tapes, films, filmstrips, and writing prompts are added based on teacher decisions for student benefit. In addition, there are VCRs and television monitors in almost every classroom. Faculty cited as a worthwhile integrated instructional presentation, in keeping with their use of various instructional materials and techniques, a literature package containing an illustrated book, a read-along audio cassette tape, and a computer-based activity for students to demonstrate understanding and competency.

Venus High teachers modify the curriculum and materials per individual students' needs. These modifications are based on daily review of assignments, next-day-feedback to students about written work, one-to-one help as requested or noticed as necessary, and listening to student questions. As a result, assignments are refocused, content re-explained, the level of instructional difficulty adjusted up or down, or content areas unknown by students emphasized.

Students work toward their academic goals by earning points on individual assignments which, in turn, make up a learning unit worth a specified number of credits. The units are based on each student's curriculum contract. The earning of points and credits is individually paced and includes the teachers' assessment of the quality of the completed work, not just student "seat time" in school. Graduation is an anticipated outcome of this instructional approach.

The staff quickly points out that the school provides more than just credits however. It also provides "care and loving", with one vehicle to this goal being academic achievement.

Students coming to Venus High probably need more academic, career, and personal counseling than do students in comprehensive high schools

according to the principal. Since the students see Venus as "one more chance", staff use that perception to both their and the student's advantage. Having high expectations for the students, staff plan further ahead with them and then push them to do better than in regular high school. Most students rise to the occasion and become responsible. Students receive positive "strokes" and ample recognition when they have done something good.

The personal and career counseling needs of students are integral components of their school experiences at Venus High. All staff are involved when a student needs personal counseling. A school psychologist is also available to complement staff efforts.

Thirty-six students (23 percent) participated in full or part-time state-approved work experience programs in 1988-89. Although most students are working primarily at fast food restaurants, Venus High still works with the community-based Career Planning Center to help students obtain jobs, consider other job alternatives, or plan long-term careers. Each school year, staff from the center offer one or two on-campus work or career orientation sessions. In turn, Venus High seeks to run each class like a good work situation. Staff expect students to come to class on time, ready to do their work. Students are expected to take care of the classrooms, the books, the computers and to get along with everybody, just as if they were on the job.

Student school activities and parent involvement are limited. Although there are no student clubs on campus, ample field trips are arranged for students. Driver training was recently added and the 1988-89 school year marked the first time a leadership class has been available to students. In this context, during summer 1989 students had the opportunity to be camp counselors with elementary school students for a week.

Parents must be present when a student enrolls at Venus High. Individual student contracts may include a parent involvement component but voluntary or informal parent participation is scant.

Obtaining appropriate staff has been a hurdle at Venus High. Although the principal needed three years to assemble the current faculty, he expressed great satisfaction with their competencies and dedication. The teachers have many talents and are credentialed in several subject areas. They want to be at Venus High. Because they believe that Venus students deserve a good education, the staff tries to provide it. To assess student success at Venus, the teachers look beyond just earning points to the whole student, especially noting steady progress on curriculum contracts, self-confidence, overcoming set-backs, and class attendance and attention.

Venus High has maintained its effectiveness because it is a very safe environment in a fairly rough area. The school strives for and achieves consistency and fairness. Students always know what to expect: if they want the school's help, they know they have to be responsible.

Mercury High School

Situated in an urban area, Mercury High School was selected as an example of a small continuation school. It has since grown and would currently be judged a medium sized school with a cumulative enrollment of 165 students and an estimated average enrollment of 91 students. The community is somewhat isolated and has a heavy academic flavor, as it houses a branch of the state university and a city college. Mercury High maintains a close relationship with the local colleges and the comprehensive high school. Mercury ranks well above the 75th percentile in expenditures per pupil, well above the average even for small continuation schools. Its student to staff ratio is 13 to 1 and it also ranks above the 75th percentile in expenditures per student for supplies.

Although located in a wealthier-than-average area, Mercury students come from families of lower socioeconomic status as determined by level of parent education. The average parent is a high school graduate but has not taken any college courses. During 1988-89, 10 students (6 %) graduated from Mercury or returned to the comprehensive high school and subsequently graduated. Seventy-five students either moved out of the district or transferred to other within-district programs.

The students represent the gamut of reading ability levels and accumulation of academic credits. Their reasons for enrolling include 1) a shortage of credits for graduation; 2) former truancy or poor attendance, and 3) dissatisfaction with the special education program at the comprehensive high school. Some students are concurrently enrolled in courses at the city college or the comprehensive high school.

The curriculum conforms to the regular district requirements, but it is not exactly in alignment with that of the local comprehensive high school. Efforts are currently under way to synchronize the two academic programs. At this time only the basic core courses are taught, but no lab courses are available in the sciences. All materials and textbooks used at Mercury High School are the standard district-approved issue. The school shares closed circuit TV and other materials with the comprehensive high school. One hour of credit is granted for each 15 hours of work.

A variety of instructional techniques are used. Many students enter into contracts for independent study. Others are engaged in cooperative learning. Some students are individually instructed, while others experience large or small group instruction. Extensive use is made of technology, with interactive video and computer assisted instruction. Some students are also enrolled in the ROP, which has "state of the art" automotive shop and computer lab. The level of instruction is generally geared to the medium to low end of the ability spectrum.

Tutoring by city college students is available to all students. Students are able to monitor their own progress toward graduation with a computerized data base.

The campus is permeated by a family atmosphere. Students describe it as a sense of belonging. The staff hold high expectations for the students and show genuine concern for their welfare. Every day a student is absent, a staff member calls his/her home. It is clear that students and staff are there because they want to be. The school has produced an interesting video documentary featuring three or four students presenting their reasons for attending the school and the benefits they perceive in the school's program.

The students at Mercury need constant feedback and have a limited sense of direction. To serve their needs, a strong counseling program has been developed. Counselors-in-training are available from the local university. Once a week a marriage and family counselor conducts a "rap session". The school has an excellent liaison with the community counseling agency. In addition, each teacher performs counseling functions with individuals or small groups. Special services are provided by the district for migrant students, limited-English proficient students, and those in need of special education services.

Mercury is oriented toward career development. In 1988-89, 25 percent of the students participated in state-approved work experience programs. Another 41 percent of the cumulative enrollment was concurrently enrolled in ROP/C programs. The school prides itself on its process of evaluating new students. When admitted, students are asked to make a commitment to do their best.

Student activities are minimal. There is no athletic program, but the student council is viewed as a very important activity. It provides an opportunity for students to learn responsibility for their own behavior.

Although the staff have been at Mercury for several years, the principal has changed three times in the last five years. In spite of the administrative turnover, there is an atmosphere of stability present. When asked how the school has maintained its level of effectiveness, the principal cites the warm, caring, enthusiastic staff as the reason. There is a high level of interpersonal communication. Teachers have a great deal of pride in the school program and they strongly believe in recognition of good quality student work. The principal describes the style of administration as "management from the bottom up."

Pluto High School

Pluto High School is situated in a large city. Over the year, it enrolls approximately 325 students, which by continuation school standards constitutes a large school. The estimated enrollment at any one time is 172 students. The program is well funded. It ranks above the 75th percentile in expenditures per student. The student to staff ratio is 14 to 1, and it spends slightly more per student than the average large continuation high school on supplies.

In 1988-89, 33 students (10 %) graduated. Approximately 25 percent of the graduates go on to college. In the same year, 49 students returned to in-district comprehensive high schools and 40 others either moved out of the district, transferred to adult school, or transferred to other in-district programs such as special education, other continuation schools or independent study. Most of the students come from the nearby community, which is classified as being of lower than average socio-economic status. On average parents of Pluto students have a level of schooling between "high school graduate" and "some college."

The school's curriculum follows the district's requirements, but there is a concerted effort to make the curriculum interdisciplinary and individualized. With the exception of English and history, all courses are designed in units, which allow students to progress at their own pace. When a student completes a unit, he/she takes a mastery test. If the test is passed, the student moves to the next unit. If not, tutoring is provided. Because of changing district requirements, English and history classes progress as a group, following the pattern of traditional class instruction.

Instructional materials are a mix of textbooks and supplemental materials. In mathematics, no textbooks are used; all materials are provided by the teacher. Science labs are available once or twice a week.

Computers are used extensively at Pluto High. One mathematics class has eight computers. The computer lab is a popular place, especially for Chapter 1 students, who have access to many English and mathematics materials.

Placement tests in mathematics, writing and English are administered on entry. Textbooks or materials are then selected to correspond to the high end of the student's reading level. Teachers employ a variety of methods and materials so that several students studying the same topic will receive different levels of instruction.

The schedule is flexible, which allows girls with children to attend. Credit is granted for 15 days of acceptable work. Classes are small, usually limited to 22 students. Teachers get to know students on an individual and personal basis. This intimate relationship is a strong

characteristic at Pluto. Each teacher serves as a home room advisor, who is responsible for calling and meeting with parents. Three excellent instructional aides are available for individual tutoring.

Students at Pluto High School seem to need more counseling services than students at the comprehensive high school. They exhibit a broad range of academic and personal problems. Many come with a history of one or two semesters of truancy.

Many of the students are working. Seventy-five students (23 percent) participate in state-approved work experience programs, and another 26 percent are concurrently enrolled in ROP/C, adult education, or pregnant minor programs. The school has a cooperative vocational education program through the ROP, which provides supplies and an instructor who supervises students on the job as well as teaching at the school. Previously, the school had a work experience counselor, but that function is now performed by a neighboring business school. Student activities are limited. There are no clubs, but there is a student government. Some boys participate in athletic programs at neighboring schools. An interesting example of community involvement is the school's adoption by the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) through the Adopt-a-School program. Employees of the IRS come to the school to tutor students, and some students go there.

A strong feature of the school is its dedicated staff. There is little staff turnover, but teachers feel stretched to the limit with five classes, individual student counseling, and supervision of independent study. The staff is small and some teachers regret that they are not able to offer all the programs of the comprehensive high school, such as a music program. Also, the faculty used to follow-up on former students informally, but they are no longer able to do that.

The school has a strong reputation for caring for its students; the school is in demand. The climate is one of high expectations. Students are expected to do their very best. If they need help, they are encouraged to ask for it. Students take responsibility for their own decisions. The principal has four "rules" which are observed: 1) No profanity, 2) No touching, 3) Cooperation, and 4) Pleasant and decent to each other. Daily phone calls are made when students are absent. The school is considered to be a safe, clean place by the students. Former students often come back to visit.

The school enjoys good parent cooperation. Parents are required to attend a conference with staff and the home room advisor four times a year. An active parent group meets monthly to discuss spending of Chapter I funds. Parents report that they are very grateful for the school.

The staff has maintained its effectiveness over time because of its caring philosophy, its strong long-term leadership, and its dedicated and stable staff.

Student Viewpoints on Continuation High School Effectiveness

This section consists of a series of eight composite student portraits, drawn from the interviews conducted on the campuses of the ten "more effective" continuation high schools in the Phase II study. The information in the portraits describes the students' academic, personal, and career needs and the curriculum, techniques, and materials used by the schools to meet those needs. Effectiveness is described from the student perspective; that is, effectiveness for him or her. Although the portraits have been written in the first person, confidentiality of personal information has been preserved by creating composites rather than transcriptions of interviews with individual students on particular school campuses. Each composite student portrait has been assigned a fictitious name.

KATE'S STORY

From the time I was a freshman at the regular school, I never fit in. People were always teasing me and I didn't have many friends. Sometimes I couldn't stand to go to class, so I'd cut and just hang out downtown. I got caught and did a lot of detention. By the time I was a junior, I had too many F's to graduate so they said I should go to the continuation high school.

I didn't want to go because I had heard that it was a place for losers. I finally went and it is a great place. People accept me here and let me work at my own pace. They expect me to be in school and I come. There are rules here but everyone knows what they are and what happens if we choose to break them. They are fair rules, too, and nobody screams and hollers if they are broken. You take the consequences and the counselor and teachers help you to solve the problem that made you break the rule. This is a safe place to be. There's hardly ever a fight because the teachers help everyone talk about their problems. They expect me to do my work and I am doing much better than I did before. It feels good to go to school now.

LARRY'S STORY

I used to go every day to the regular high school and my grades were all right. Then a few months ago things got really bad at home and I couldn't handle it. I ran away so I didn't go to school for about six weeks. Things started working out at home, but I failed all my classes that semester.

I came to the continuation high school so I could graduate. It's great here. I can do lots of my work on the computer here. I really like learning from the computer and about how to work it. I like being able to make my own choices about how fast I complete my work and not have to be bored if the whole class doesn't learn as fast as I do. Also, everyone talks real openly and my teachers really care about what's happening with me. I can talk to a counselor right when things bug me instead of having to take a number and wait my turn.

MARY'S STORY

I went to the regular high school two and a half years. Then I got pregnant. It was O.K. for a while, but when I started to show I felt really awkward and uncomfortable. I had a lot of morning sickness and was really tired. I missed a lot of school and lost too many credits to graduate with my class.

When I came here everyone made me feel really welcome. I was able to do work at my own pace and I made up the credits I lost and even earned extra credit so when the baby is born, I won't get behind. I have had a lot of family and boyfriend problems since I got pregnant and I can talk to the teachers here. I can trust them to help me and give me support when I need it. I really have to be responsible now, and I know I can earn my high school diploma here.

NED'S STORY

I am 18 and I'm going into the military in a couple of months. I didn't want to wait eight months till I could graduate from the regular high school so I came here. I have a goal and I am willing to work hard to get there. Here I can work as quickly as I want. The school doesn't cut corners though. I have to earn my credit by doing all my work and scoring high, but my teachers are always willing to listen and help. I always know what I have to do to earn credit. When I finish all my credit and pass the proficiency exams, I will have my diploma. I don't have to wait till June just because that is the graduation day.

OLIVIA'S STORY

I liked the regular high school for the first three years and I was involved in extra activities. Several months ago I started feeling tired all the time. I couldn't wake up in the morning and if I did I could barely stay awake in the afternoon. Some days I couldn't go to school or I would have to leave early. I made my work up but failed many classes because of my attendance. The doctor finally found that I had a blood disorder and I'm better, but the school made me feel like I was faking all the time.

I came here to catch up and I love it. I still have a hard time waking up so my schedule starts at 10:00 AM. I can take lots of work home so I can study when I have the most energy. All the teachers and the principal ask me how I feel and call home to check on me if I'm not here. I really want to go to college and I wouldn't have had a chance to graduate if it weren't for this school.

PAUL'S STORY

I screwed up my sophomore year and did lots of drugs. I got caught holding and went to "juvy" for a while. When I got out, I started all over and ended up in a drug rehab program. I really have my head on straight now, but I failed a bunch of classes. Also, my using friends

were at the regular high school and I knew it would be bad news to go back.

I came to the continuation high school because I wanted a second chance. We have lots of counseling, in class and out, which is helping me to stay straight. I don't concentrate real well yet, so working at my own pace helps. The teachers have lots of different kinds of materials to work in. I read OK, but I don't remember what I read sometimes so I can listen to tapes or learn the material from a videotape. I'm really learning more here than I did in my other high school. Plus I get a lot of help from all the teachers and kids, too. I really want to get my act together and get my diploma. I know, that if I am willing to work, I can do it here.

ROSE'S STORY

I work full-time and sometimes my hours change or are pretty late. I was having a hard time making the classes at the regular high school. I'd miss the lectures and get really behind, plus they were always on my case about my attendance. I have a car to pay for and I don't live at home, so I can't afford to not work and just go to school.

I came to the continuation high school because I wanted to get my diploma. I know I need it to get ahead in this job or any other job. I can schedule my classes here on just 1 day each week and earn credit for working through the work experience program. The teachers are all great to help me when I'm here and they see to it I have plenty of work to do at home. If I hadn't come to this school I would have dropped out. This school really helped me.

STEVE'S STORY

I've never really enjoyed school much. They tell me my test scores indicate that I am very bright but you wouldn't know it by looking at my report card. It stinks. I would get really bored sitting in class after class listening to the teachers lecture about things I learned in grammar school and then having to do it all again for homework. So I didn't. By my junior year, I had enough F's to prove to everyone that I was a "screw up" and they told me I should go to the continuation school.

At first I thought, "OK, I'll play your game and hang around here till I turn 18 and then I'm outta here." Well, something really weird happened when I came here. The classes were really different than what I had been used to. The instruction is varied. Some days the teacher does group activities, some days we work individually on our own and some days we do cooperative kinds of projects. I am moving through this program quickly but I'm learning things I don't already know. I've decided I want to go to college so my individual program has me working with some college texts that the teacher found for me. I don't know what the future holds for me, but it sure looks brighter now than it ever did before.

Summary

The school vignettes emphasize the importance of a variety of factors which work together to support and guide students both academically and personally. Supportive teacher/student relationships are consistently indicated as components of program effectiveness. Individualized instruction is discussed often, as is a fair and caring disciplinary policy which provides structure for students. Counseling, in its many forms, is mentioned in every instance as a fundamental building block of the academic program. Curriculum is also seen as important. Those curricular aspects which are most often discussed relate to the maintenance of high standards for academic coursework coupled with career preparation and the development of personal skills, understandings, and behaviors for students. District and community support for the school and for the students is considered worthy of discussion by many of the participants.

Certain factors, elicited during the Phase I study, are supported by the interview data as well. Staff in almost all of the schools mentioned the strong fiscal and administrative support provided by their districts. Almost all of the interviews portray career preparation as an emphasis of the school. Participation in work experience and ROC/ROP programs is common and actively supported by staff. Almost all of the schools had variable credit systems and staff actively encouraged students to take advantage of the opportunity to make up credits for graduation. Finally, voluntary transfer from the comprehensive high school to the continuation high school was seen as important both for the individual students and for the viability of the educational program.

The student portraits demonstrate that students enroll in continuation high schools for a variety of reasons. Some students volunteer and are eager to change schools. Some students are guided there by staff at their comprehensive high schools. Some students are enrolled involuntarily for disciplinary reasons, which may include truancy or failure to comply with the discipline code at the comprehensive high school. A few students may be involuntarily transferred as a condition of probation under the auspices of a juvenile court.

While the reasons for enrolling vary from student to student, the reasons for the success achieved by students appear similar. Effective continuation schools offer students a flexible, caring, safe instructional environment in which they have opportunities to recoup academically, to develop skills for coping with emotional and family problems, and to plan for future careers. Individualized instruction coupled with a variable credit system allows students who have fallen behind to recover academically. Counseling for family, substance abuse, and personal problems offers students an opportunity to develop skills for coping with personal aspects of their lives and freeing them to learn. Structure and discipline combined with caring attitudes on the part of staff enable the development of a peer culture which supports school involvement and acceptance of authority. Finally, school

adjustment to work schedules and provision of opportunities to earn work experience credits enable students who must help to support themselves, to succeed in school.

The following Chapter develops conclusions based on these school and student vignettes and on the topical classifications of interview content. The findings of the Phase I study are considered within the context of the Phase II findings.

CHAPTER IV. Conclusions

The original purpose of the study was to examine the use of innovative curricula and instructional techniques in schools which were effective and had high levels of expenditures for books and materials. Of the selected schools, seven had levels of expenditures well above the state average and three had levels of expenditures at or below the state average. Little differentiation was seen between the schools on items related to instructional delivery and curriculum. The majority of the schools, regardless of supply expenditure level, are characterized by: curricula aligned with state frameworks and district guidelines, heavy use of individualized instruction, use of technology (including computers, interactive video, VCRs, and accompanying materials), and a variety of materials (including newspapers and periodicals, manipulatives, texts and correlated materials, practical materials such as income tax forms). Apparently those schools with low supply budgets are able to obtain, by other means, sufficient materials and supplies to allow for individualization of instruction.

The following portions of this chapter present conclusions, related to the two more general research questions, which are based on the school descriptions, student portraits, and content of the interviews classified by topic.

Question 1. What instructional curricula, techniques, and materials have contributed to the effectiveness of continuation high schools?

The ten "more effective" schools studied in Phase II offer a curriculum with well-developed academic, personal, and career components to their students. The academic portion of the curriculum is generally similar to that provided in local comprehensive high schools. In many of these districts efforts are either completed or underway to align various subject matter curricula to state frameworks.

School staff use a variety of instructional and guidance techniques to motivate and assist their students in developing perceptions of themselves as potential graduates rather than failures. Students also use similar techniques to help their fellow students. School staff obtained, adapted and created instructional materials to match the current needs of their students. In addition, persons from the community contribute their talent, knowledge, and materials to schools.

Most of the significant findings of the Phase I study were confirmed by the Phase II investigation. The majority of the studied schools are very well-funded, which translates, in practice, into low student to staff ratios, allowing for individualized instruction and high levels of personal counseling. Sufficient funding also allows for purchases of supplies and materials to promote computer literacy, to provide

courses in vocational areas, and to encourage creativity in individualizing instructional materials.

All but one of the selected schools offers a variable credit approach, allowing students to earn more units than the standard allowed in the comprehensive high school. This is in contrast to comprehensive high schools and some continuation schools in which the number of credits to be earned per semester is limited. In general, students take advantage of this system in the effective continuation high schools, doing extra work for more credit. In practice, this approach allows for more individualization of instruction, more use of independent study modules, and more opportunity for students who are behind in their acquisition of credits to make up the deficit. The opportunity to succeed may well encourage students to stay in school and accumulate enough credits to graduate.

The more effective schools generally have low rates of involuntary transferring. For seven of the ten schools, 98 percent or more of the students elected to transfer to the continuation school. Low rates of involuntary transferring may indicate both that the climate within the continuation school is better, with less frustration and hostility on the parts of students, and that the comprehensive high school has handled transfers in a manner which preserves student choice and dignity.

A final factor clearly related to school effectiveness is the participation of students in work experience programs and concurrent enrollment programs. The percent of students participating in state approved work experience programs was the single factor most capable of discriminating between less and more effective continuation schools in the Phase I study. Among these ten schools, all but one had a substantial percentage of their students enrolled in work experience programs. Despite the fact that in general these jobs are not preparing them for careers, students benefit from their work experiences by virtue of the increased responsibility and independence they acquire as wage earners, and by the increased numbers of credits they are able to accumulate.

The percent of students concurrently enrolled in ROP/C, adult school, independent study, or pregnant minor programs is similarly discriminatory between less and more effective continuation school programs. In practice, high rates of participation in concurrent enrollment programs seem to be related to a sense of purpose and successful achievement for students. Because most of these students have had many experiences of failure, their successful experiences in these programs may inspire them to stay in school and to complete an education.

Several additional elements, which were not apparent in the Phase I study, are discernibly connected to the success of the more effective schools. These elements include the highly positive, supportive attitudes exhibited by staff, principals, teachers, secretaries, and

counselors. Positive attitudes are apparently internalized by students, who begin to see the school population as "family" and to treat each other with the same positive acceptance. The omnipresence of counseling also contributes to a "therapeutic" environment, in which students learn to cope with existing situations and to resolve enough problems so that they can concentrate on academic achievement.

Finally, the curriculum and instruction in many of the schools is characterized by a combination of individualization and practicality. Coursework is relevant to student needs, aspirations, and interests. A number of schools place emphasis on career related courses and modules. In addition, many of the staff members mentioned the degree to which they try to provide a curriculum comparable in rigor and content to that provided in the comprehensive high school, at the same time keeping students interested and encouraged.

Question 2. How have effective continuation high schools maintained their effectiveness?

Respondents noted five major factors which they thought contributed to continued effectiveness: staff commitment and attitudes, staff stability, fiscal and organizational support, school climate and environment, and an emphasis on learning rather than teaching.

Numerous reports, primarily by principals but also by students, emphasize the role of staff commitment and attitudes. Staff, both credentialed and certificated are seen as positive, firm, consistent, caring, and enthusiastic. They are willing and able to adapt instruction and curriculum to student interests and abilities. Teachers take pride in the program they offer to students. Principals involve themselves with students in other than disciplinary ways. All staff make an effort to communicate with and support students.

In general, staff members are hired specifically for the continuation school or transfer because of interest and commitment to the school philosophy and purpose. Numerous responses indicate that teachers, and often principals as well, tend to stay on at the school. Staff configurations are stable and staff, like students, view the school as "family".

Staff members at the more effective continuation schools see the district and community as supportive. They believe that their schools are viewed as important by district administration and boards of education, that the schools receive substantial fiscal support, and that these factors translate into the availability of sufficient teachers to meet the needs of students and appropriate resources to ensure program quality. Many respondents also mentioned the support and resources which they received from the community both in terms of student jobs, speakers, and mentors, and in terms of monetary or "in-kind" contributions.

The school environment is viewed as safe and consistent, a haven for students who often have a very different environment at home. Emphasis in the schools is placed on communication, fair and consistent behavior, the development of personal relationships, and support for each other. Respondents see the effect of such an environment as freeing students to address their own learning.

Finally, schools emphasize learning rather than teaching. Curriculum, instruction, materials, learning space, and learning time are adapted to the needs of the students. Students are recognized for good quality work. All students are expected to learn. When that is not happening, staff feel that they are responsible for finding out why and changing the situation.

Chapter V. Recommendations

This chapter presents recommendations for improving continuation high schools and for extending successful practices to comprehensive high schools. Recommendations are offered at the state level to the Legislature, the Department of Education, and institutes for teacher training. Recommendations are offered at the local level to school districts and county superintendents.

These recommendations are based on the findings and conclusions of the Phase II study and on the experience of professionals in the area of continuation education, alternative education, and educational options. The recommendations of the Phase I study (see Appendix C) should be considered in conjunction with these recommendations as an attempt was made to avoid duplication. In some instances, conclusions similar to those of the Phase I study were so clearly drawn in the Phase II study that recommendations have been offered which overlap those of the first study.

To the Legislature

Revise the funding process for continuation programs, instituting separate revenue limits for continuation high schools, providing incentives for limiting the size of individual continuation schools, and establishing incentives for continuation high schools to extend their support services to students still functioning within the comprehensive high school.

Enact legislation mandating that transfers to continuation high schools be voluntary.

To the California Department of Education

Provide technical assistance to both comprehensive and continuation high schools on successful methods of reaching high-risk students and on the findings of the continuation high school evaluations.

Include the extension of certain services proven to be successful in continuation high schools to comprehensive high schools in planning for the Every Student Succeeds initiative, the Educational Options Strategic Plan, and the High School Task Force report.

To institutes for teacher training

Include specific instruction in methods of teaching and supporting high risk youth in all programs of teacher preparation.

To districts

Promote the extension of attitudes and practices which have proven to be successful in continuation schools within all district high schools in order to address academic or behavioral problems without removing students from mainstream programs.

Promote staff development related to positive, supportive behavior toward students, an emphasis on learning outcomes, fair and consistent limits, and communication.

Limit involuntary transfers to continuation education programs. When necessary, view such transfers as a positive option for students rather than a disciplinary action in order to decrease the stigma attached to continuation programs.

Allow all continuation high school students to enroll concurrently in classes and activities on the comprehensive high school campus when those classes and activities are not available at the continuation high school.

Ensure that all funding resources for which students qualify are sent to the continuation high school when the student transfers.

To county superintendents

Provide experienced technical support on factors associated with successful continuation school programs to improve delivery and timeliness of services to students both within comprehensive and alternative programs.

APPENDIX C: RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE PHASE I STUDY
CONTINUATION HIGH SCHOOL EFFECTIVENESS MULTIVARIATE
ANALYSIS OF 441 SCHOOL OUTCOMES

Recommendations from the Phase I Study: Continuation High School Effectiveness Multivariate Analysis of 441 School Outcomes.

The above discussion indicates that the state can improve continuation school outcomes through the following actions.

1. Provide supplementary funding for mid-sized and small schools established prior to 1979.
2. Provide apportionment funding for school attendance in excess of 15 hours per week.

Districts can improve continuation school outcomes through the following actions:

1. Increase the proportions of students in work study and concurrently enrolled in adult classes, regional occupation programs, independent study and/or pregnant minor programs.
2. Increase student attendance beyond 15 hours per week.
3. Consolidate small schools and disperse large schools.
4. Restrict involuntary and freshman transfers.
5. Restrict student/staff ratios to 20:1 or less in large and mid-sized schools, and to 15:1 or less in small schools.
6. Approve instructional supply budgets for \$100 per enrollee.

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